

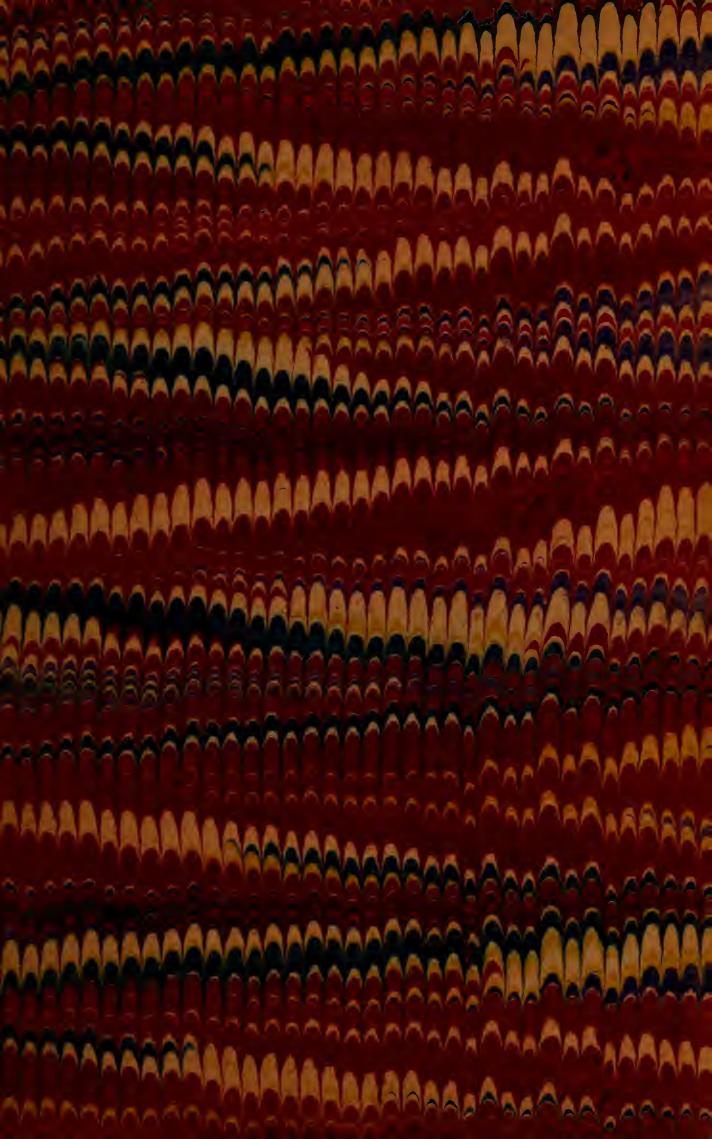
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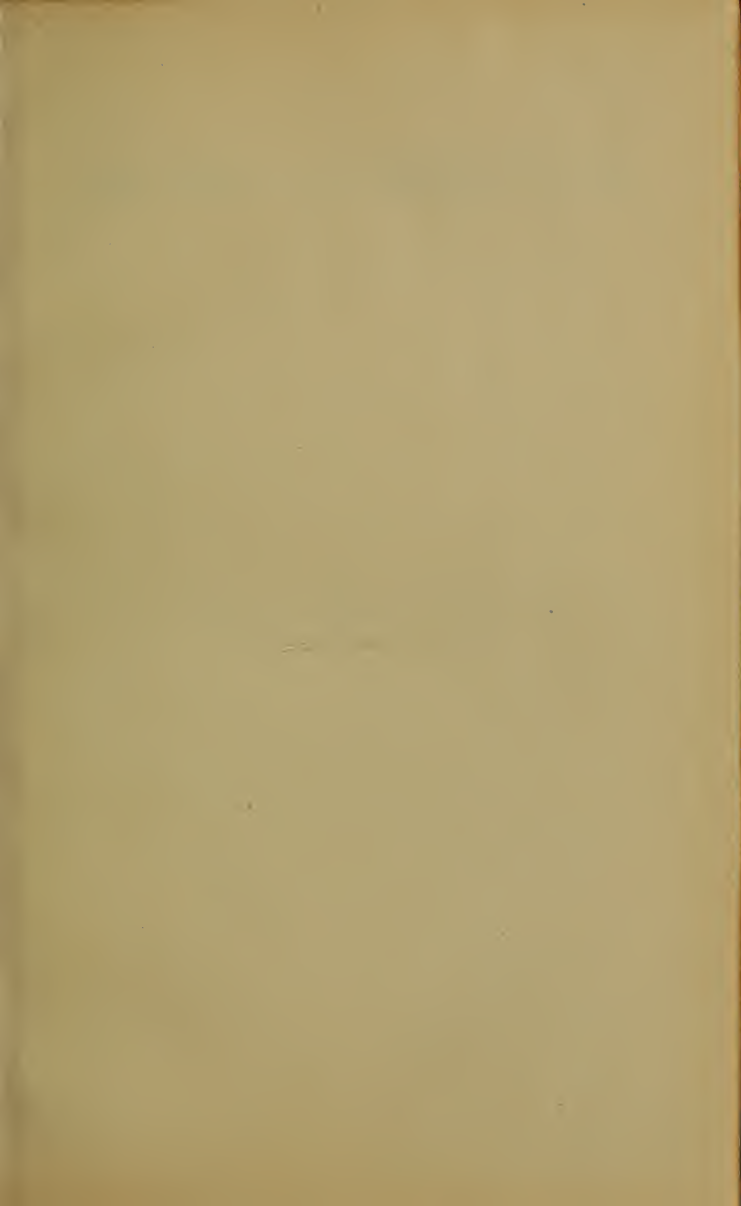
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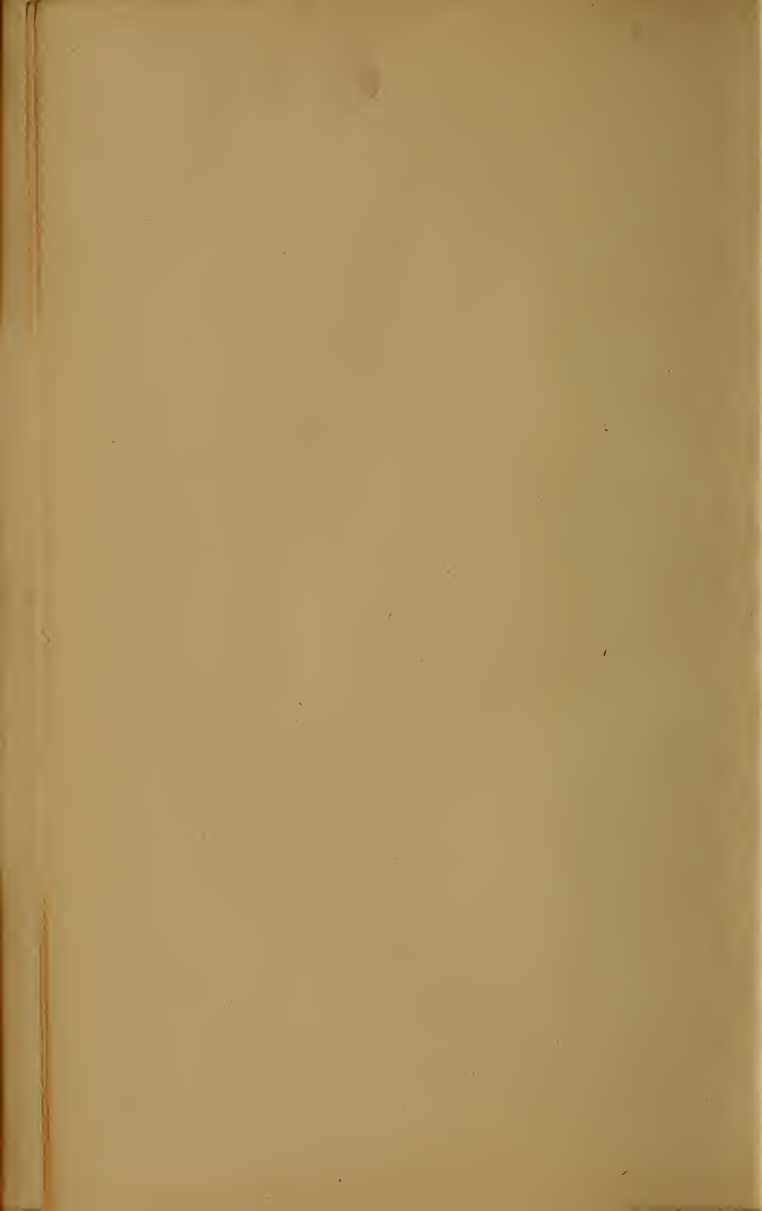
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.











BEING A CHRISTIAN.

By Rev. Jas. A. Duncan,
Of the Holston Conference.



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BEING A CHRISTIAN.

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BY REV. JAS. A. DUNCAN,
Of the Holston Conference.

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Preface.

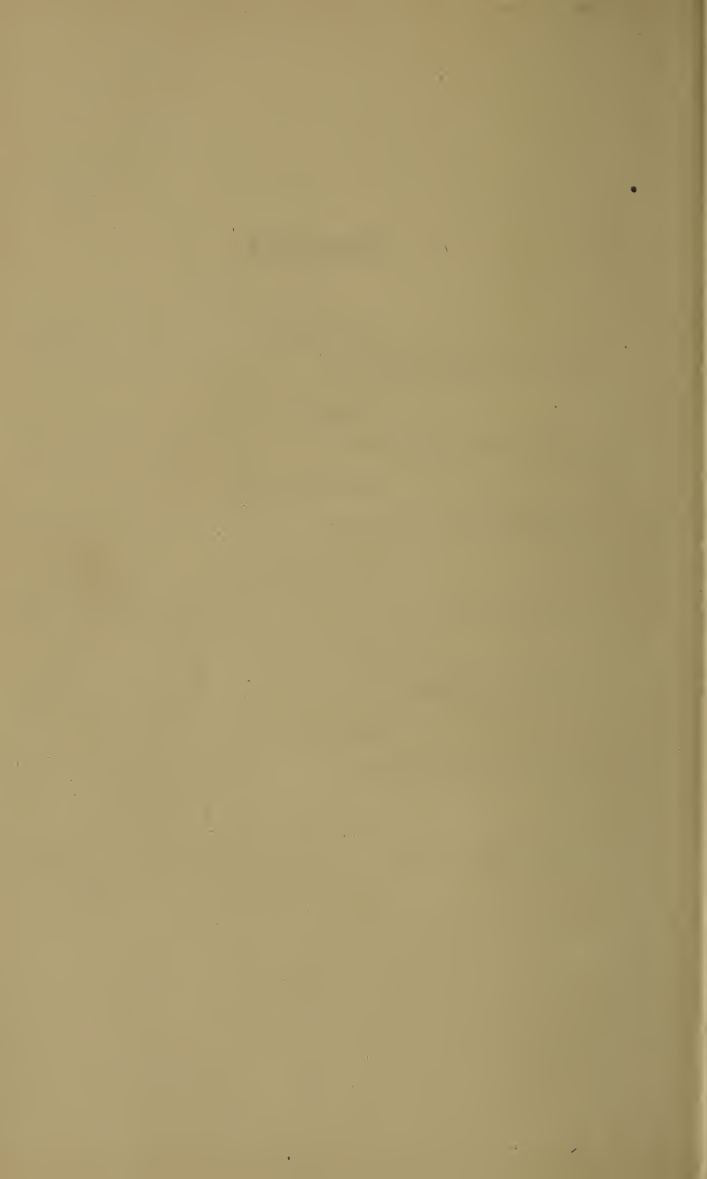
AN old writer once said: "There is nothing more talked about than religion; nothing less understood; nothing more neglected." If the sermon of Anthony Farrindon in which these words occur had been reported in yesterday's newspaper instead of having been uttered two hundred years ago, they would not have been better adapted to describe the conditions surrounding us. What is the Christian religion? and what does it mean to be a Christian? These questions have been asked, and have been variously answered, for nearly two thousand years; and yet, though often answered adequately, there are many still who do not seem to know what being a Christian is. One thing makes it easier for this question to be answered to-day than ever before; and that is, there are, I believe, more earnest, sincere inquirers of the way of life. If these pages shall be of even a small degree of benefit to such, my purpose will be accomplished.

JAS. A. DUNCAN.

Kansas City, Mo., *May* 13, 1896.

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Being a Christian.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTIAN CONSCIOUSNESS.

WE are justly proud of our age, and highly appreciative of the great advancement in every direction which characterizes it. The trees our fathers planted and tended with so much care are to-day bearing abundant fruit, of which it is our privilege to eat. There is one thing to be seen in this day for which we should be peculiarly grateful: that there is now a clearer apprehension of the meaning of the mission of Christ to mankind, and a better understanding of the duties, privileges, and purposes of a Christian life.

At first sight it seems not a little strange that so long a time should have elapsed before the world should know what it means to be a Christian, and that even now there are false notions respecting it; but reflection will show that after all it is not so great-

ly to be wondered at. Christ brought to the world the greatest thoughts it has ever been man's lot to contemplate, and laid before humanity a plan of life so much higher and so much more comprehensive than any hitherto thought of that it would have been strange if it had been fully grasped at first. Sometimes we are told that this is not true—that there is nothing new, nothing original in the teachings of Jesus. Men cite the sayings of the rabbis, the teachings of the Old Testament, the sacred books of the Indians, Persians, Chinese, and others, culling from them certain things like some of the utterances of the Master, and telling us that inasmuch as Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius uttered these thoughts they are not to be considered as original when uttered by Jesus; that these truths which the Christian world has claimed as new must be put down really as old. No truth is new. All truth is as old as God, and he is eternal. That is new to the world, however, which comes to the world in a light in which it was never before seen on earth, and gives to men ideas such as were not before entertained, and

could not have been entertained had not the truth been put in just that light. This is what Jesus did, and his originality lies in this.

He gave the world the real philosopher's stone. Chemists and alchemists have dreamed of a something by which all base metals should be transmuted into gold. They did not know that their dream was a prophecy, and that One would come who would more than fulfill it: that great truths would become the possession of mankind through a teacher come from God which should have power to transmute things which now seem base into priceless treasures; take the bitter experiences of life and sweeten them, and fill with more than a golden glory the dark, narrow walls of the grave itself. These same students, seeing so much of sickness and death, felt that something better must belong to the race, and sought far and wide for a precious elixir which should give endless life to mortals. This elixir was more than found when life and immortality were brought to light in the gospel. The wildest dream of the most sanguine philosopher did not comprehend a tithe of what Jesus meant

when he said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

When we see thus even in small measure something of the greatness of the truths brought to man by Jesus, I do not think it is in the least surprising that the world has taken so many centuries, even under the influence of these very teachings, to come to a right understanding of their meaning.

You remember that beautiful story of the two sad-hearted disciples walking to Emmaus. They were talking, you know, about the death of Jesus. They had watched with ever increasing interest a life which was in so many respects incomprehensible to them. At times he appeared to be only a peasant, mingling freely with the multitude, or sitting at some humble table, while at other times there was so much about him that was kingly that his rightful place seemed to be a throne. He had withdrawn from them on one occasion when they would have forced a crown upon him, while only a few days since he had declared that if the people should be forbidden to sing their glad ho-

sanna songs about him the very stones on the roadside would cry out. More and more had they been impressed with him, until they had become almost certain that he was indeed the Messiah. "This is He who is to redeem Israel," they said among themselves; and their hearts bounded with a great joy. But now their hopes are dashed to the ground. It is true that a vision of angels is reported to have been seen by some of the women who had identified themselves with him, but such a story was hardly to be credited. No, he was crucified, dead, and buried. He had been laid in Joseph's tomb in the garden, and with him were buried those high hopes which only a few days since had so gladdened their hearts. They still have the precious memory of his self-sacrificing life, but that is all.

While these disciples are thus talking they are joined by a seeming stranger, who asks what it is that makes them so sad. Amazed that anyone could ask such a question, when, from their point of view, there is only one thing to talk about, they tell him about Jesus, and what their hopes had been. He then begins to talk to them about the Christ,

interesting them more and more deeply, until Emmaus is reached. They persuade him to enter the house with them, and together they sit down to the evening meal. Their heads are bowed while the stranger gives thanks; but almost before he has uttered the last word of the thanksgiving, they look up in astonishment—for only One ever gave thanks like that—and find that he is gone.

It is enough. The old, wrong notions about Christ have disappeared. They are still disciples, but there is something in the discipleship which it never had before. They have had a view of a larger Christ, still human, but also, as never before, divine. They hasten at once with the glad news to their comrades, and tell them that they have seen Jesus. They have now for the first time a real Christian consciousness.

There is no mysterious process about this. They have seen Jesus as he really is. Not merely the man of flesh and blood, looked upon with the eye of the flesh; but the Christ of God, who has given himself to the world as well as for the world; who has solved the problem of human life by living

as men should live, and has come back from beyond the grave with the first full assurance of immortality ever given to man. This is the history of the dawn of Christian consciousness in every soul. Thomas had known Christ during his ministry, but only after the resurrection did he see him really; then, falling at his feet, he said, "My Lord, and my God." Saul of Tarsus knew of the man Jesus. He knew what the followers of the Nazarene were doing in the world. He had seen the face of Stephen when it glowed with a "light never seen on land or sea," and he had determined as a consistent Jew to do all in his power to uproot the terrible heresies this man's teaching had planted. On his way to Damascus there came to him a revelation of the truth. To the voice out of the brightness he said, "Who art thou?" and the answer came, "I am Jesus." He saw the Master then for the first time, and the Christian consciousness born at that moment never left him.

Christian consciousness, then, comes to us when we first see Christ as he is. Living in a Christian land, we believe in Christ.

There is not an article of the Christian faith about which even a small minority of us have many doubts, yet, at the same time, many are aware that they have no Christian consciousness. An indirect or an evasive answer is usually given to the question, "Are you a Christian?" There should be no more evasion to such a question than there is by the physician who is asked, "Are you a physician?" He has only one answer to such a question; the physician consciousness is his, and his answer, without any ostentation or lack of humility, is, "Yes." In order for us to have this consciousness, we must do as the two disciples at Emmaus and as Thomas did, and as Saul did: we must see Jesus for ourselves, not merely look at him through the eyes of others.

What is it to see Jesus? To see him is first of all to see man. Christ delighted in calling himself the Son of man. We are the children of individuals. We belong to a nation, a race, an age. He is the child of humanity, and belongs to all time. All the possibilities of the race are summed up in him. He shows us what man may become,

what God in his plans for the race designs him to become. Jesus is not to be looked upon merely as an ideal man; he is the real man.

The first step, then, toward the possession of a Christian consciousness is seeing what humanity is, what it means to be a man. You see Christianity is not some other-worldly, strange thing. It belongs to this world. Indeed, it begins in a true self-consciousness. When one looks at Jesus as the Son of man, and recognizes the fact that he is looking at his own elder brother; sees himself as akin to him, to be like whom is the proudest distinction that can come to a human being, and purposes in his heart to keep before himself the truth thus recognized, he has then within himself the beginnings of Christian consciousness.

But it is more than this. Jesus is not only to be seen as the Son of man, but also as the Son of God. As we see humanity when we see him as the child of the race, and have then for the first time an adequate conception of man, so we see God when we see him as God's Son, and get that idea of the divine Fatherhood which without the Son-

ship it would be impossible for us ever to have formed. It is not upon an isolated fact that we look. As we see him, the Son of the Father, we are also to see ourselves still as his brethren, therefore children of God ourselves. It is when we thus see Christ, and because we see him for the first time ourselves, that Christian consciousness is born within us, the consciousness that "I am a child of God." The recognition of this fact is the foundation of a Christian life, and all subsequent growth Christward is dependent upon keeping this truth consciously before us.

This consciousness is never for a moment lost by Jesus. When he was only a child, it was the Father's, *his* Father's business that concerned him. When baptized of John, the encouraging voice was the voice speaking from the Father to the Son. The temptation in the wilderness was a temptation to make him lose sight of this; hence, "If thou be the Son of God" was the form the temptation took. But never did he allow this precious possession to depart from him. In the hour of agony in Gethsemane his cry is

to his Father, and because of the consciousness that God was his Father he could drink of the cup if the Father willed it. On the cross it was "Father, forgive them." Had Jesus lost this consciousness of Sonship, he could not have lived his life; nor can we as his disciples live the Christian life without it.

Christian consciousness deepens and becomes a greater force in the life in proportion as we become like the Master. In order to keep it fully alive, we are to live with him. He stands by the side of every child of man waiting for recognition, and when recognized asks for constant companionship. A man has in life some supreme purpose. He intends to be a painter, a sculptor, a mechanic, a builder, an explorer. In all that comes to him in life, in all that he enters into, the thought that he is to be this thing is present. It underlies all his actions, and explains all his conduct. Whatever he does, his artist consciousness or mechanic consciousness is ever present. So in the Christian life Christ is all in all. The consciousness that we are his disciples, students of his life, followers of his doctrines, personal

friends of himself, children of his Father, is to underlie all our actions, to be the real foundation of all our plans.

If this is done, then we will not be harassed with doubts. Can you conceive of a question which St. Paul would have thought stranger than the question, "Are you a Christian?" Christian consciousness was his just as merchant consciousness belongs to the merchant.

When this is ours, temptation loses much of its force. Every temptation is a temptation to possess ourselves of something more desirable than what we now possess, and which we can only obtain, so it is made to appear, by the means the temptation suggests. If we have the consciousness that we are the Father's children, and have the conception of the love of that Father which those have who see his character as it shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ, will we not say to the temptation: "No; my Father knows what is best for his child, and if he wants me to have this thing I will have it some day pure and clean from his own holy hand." Suppose the temptation is to get wealth, or power, or position, by a means

which we know to be wrong : do you not see what a tower of strength we have in the consciousness that we are the children of a Father who proposes to give to each one of us just that which will enable us most efficiently to do the work in his world which we were created to perform?

This guards us, too, against envy and jealousy, and saves us from all littleness. The consciousness that he was the Son of God only made Jesus realize as no other had done that all men were the children of God. So he talks of "your Father which is in heaven," and teaches us to pray, "Our Father." So when we have this consciousness we will rejoice in the advancement of every man. We will rejoice in every discovery, in every forward movement, in every message we receive telling of one who has come to himself, and is now conscious that he, too, is the child of God. How full Christian consciousness makes life ! How rich we know ourselves to be, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord" !

CHAPTER II.

A CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE.

THEODORE PARKER says that when he was a little child not more than five years of age he went out on the farm with his father, who, after taking him some distance, sent him back to the house alone. The way home lay near a pond, on whose bank were flowers. Attracted by a beautiful rhododra he went toward it, and when he reached it saw a small tortoise sunning himself at its roots. Taking up a stick he raised it to strike the tortoise, when he seemed to hear a voice telling him not to do it. The voice was so clear and the utterance so distinct that he was startled, and dropping the stick he ran to the house and told his mother what had happened, asking her at the same time to tell him what the voice was. She told him that it was conscience, and that if he always heeded it he would grow up to be a good man, but that if he failed to listen to it he

would not be in life what she desired her boy to become.

There is within each one of us a something, usually called conscience, which occupies the position of policeman in our moral life. As in the story told above, it is largely the duty of this officer to arrest when a course of conduct is proposed that is not right. This policeman, however, is like that officer sometimes is in the cities: capable of being influenced by his surroundings, and by what he soon learns is expected of him. He is by no means infallible, nor is his uneducated standard always high. The standard of this moral policeman is the highest standard prevailing among the people in the midst of whom he lives. The story told above of Theodore Parker could not have been told of a native savage. This child's conscience was one which had been quickened by all the teaching he had received from a godly mother from the time he could attend to anything to the day of the event I have spoken of; but had he on the other hand been in the habit of seeing things killed from the first dawning of conscious-

ness until he was five years old, he would never have heard a voice telling him not to kill the tortoise.

Conscience is thus affected by our surroundings, by the standard of piety that prevails about us. This is why in certain communities forms of amusement that you perhaps have been taught were wrong, and which your conscience protested against your indulging in when you were tempted to do so, are entered into heartily by people in whose integrity you have perfect confidence, and whose Christian profession you believe to be sincere, without any qualms of conscience on their part whatever. Or perhaps, in your own case, there are things which you have been told since you became a professing Christian that you must not do, and you have been unable to see why, your conscience in nowise protesting against the doing of these things.

The unimpaired conscience of anyone is the high-water mark of ethical life in his community, but it is no more than this. St. Paul, when he was Saul of Tarsus, tells us that in all good conscience he perse-

cuted the Church of Christ. It seems very strange to us that a man should put people to death with a conscience void of offense toward God and man, and yet we must remember that he regarded himself at that time as doing God service by stopping the progress of pernicious heresy in the world.

There is another thing about conscience that it is well for us to bear in mind: each man's conscience is a policeman for him, and not for the whole community. Have you not seen people who wanted to be conscience for everybody? They were not satisfied to be guided themselves by the voice of their consciences, but they wanted everybody else to listen to what this policeman on their beat had to say. Now there must be a standard of piety in the world, but it is by no means safe to allow that standard to be any man's conscience. "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. . . . So then each one of us shall give account of *himself* to God. . . . Let us not therefore judge

one another any more; but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling."

Our consciences are not things apart from us, independent of us, and unaffected by our actions, but they are a part of us, and whatever we do of right or of wrong has its effect upon the conscience as well as upon all that goes to make up these selves of ours. No single act of life but leaves the whole life different from what it was. This in no small measure accounts for the fact that conscience is by no means to be regarded as an infallible rule of right even for the individual, to say nothing of making our consciences the rule of right for the community. It not infrequently happens that two persons pursue diametrically different courses of conduct, each claiming for himself the approval of his conscience.

Do not let us conclude because of these things that conscience is worthless. I only want you to see what it is worth, and to neither overestimate it nor underestimate it. We do not despise the judgment of men merely because we realize that no man

is infallible in his opinions. We go to a friend and ask his advice about a business enterprise. He advises us to embark in it. We know him to be a successful business man, and take his advice. The enterprise proves a failure, and we are ruined. Or we go to one and ask his advice, and we are advised not to have anything to do with it. We take the advice, but soon learn to our chagrin that had we put our money into it we would have made a fortune. Now because of these mistakes we do not say that human judgment is a worthless thing; we only say that men are liable to err in judgment.

In matters of conscience there is this same fallibility, except that here we have an advantage not possessed in matters of judgment. We have a standard which is perfect and by which our consciences can be tried. It is because of this that a very high degree of perfection in character is attainable by any man, even though he may not be above the average in intellect. This standard is to be kept before the mind, and up to it the conscience is to be educated.

The character of Jesus is the touchstone. In all matters of conscience, as well as in everything else pertaining to the Christian life, he is both the model after which all is to be fashioned and the ideal toward which we are incessantly to strive. The conscience of Jesus was keyed to the highest spiritual tone in the universe. Let us look at its workings as they are to be seen on two occasions in his life; one in childhood, and the other near the close, that grand close which would never have been possible had there been a violation of conscience at any intermediate point.

When the anxious mother questioned him in the temple, after she had searched in vain for him among the friends in the caravan and had returned to Jerusalem with a heavy heart wondering what could have become of him, his simple answer was that he must be about his Father's business. In this first glimpse we have of him after he reaches self-consciousness, we find him yielding implicit obedience to the highest call to which a soul can respond. Near the close of his earthly life, in this same city, Jerusalem,

some Greeks who have heard of him ask to see him. When they are brought into his presence he seems to be profoundly moved. The very presence of these Gentiles suggested, no doubt with great force, the supreme agony he was to endure, through which they should be brought to a knowledge of the truth. After illustrating life through death with a grain of wheat, he speaks, it appears, rather to himself than to those about him. A conflict is going on within him, and we are permitted to listen at the very door of the heart of the Son of man, and hear what he says, and see him win the victory. The hour of great suffering is at hand. The shadow of the cross, cold, fearful, is already upon him. The possibility of escape is presented to him. Now bow the head and listen. "What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." This is the note to which the conscience of Jesus was keyed: "Father, glorify thy name." Not for a moment in all his life did he swerve from this. There were times of

terrible temptation; there was even a time when the range of divine possibility was challenged to see if there was any other way than that which was presented; but when none was found, he was true to the convictions of his soul, the promptings of his conscience: "Thy will, not mine, be done."

As the conscience of Jesus was keyed to this note, "Father, glorify thy name," ours must be satisfied with no lower tone. The value of conscience depends upon its education, and Jesus is the only one who is capable of educating it properly. A Christian conscience is one which has Christ for its standard. If our consciences approve what we know from his character he would disapprove, then the conscience is wrong.

Conscience is thus not in itself, and apart from the Master, an absolute standard of right and wrong. Indeed, its voice is not even at times distinguishable from the voice of self-interest, and not infrequently the satisfaction arising from having carried out a cherished plan is mistaken for the approval of conscience. So we must ask whether

the course of conduct proposed, or the act performed, is such that like the life of Jesus it glorifies the Father's name. It is when this course has been pursued that conscience becomes more and more nearly the voice of God in the soul.

If this standard for conscience was always regarded, many things which are now vexed questions would be solved. Take the question of amusements. Many engage in forms of amusement saying that their consciences do not condemn them in the least; that they can see no harm in these things. I am speaking now of good people, sincere people. The trouble with them is that they have made conscience, not Christ, the standard; whereas Christ is to be the standard for conscience itself. So many treat their consciences as though they were incorruptible entities so far removed from themselves that no matter what they were, or what they did, the voice of conscience would still be an infallible rule of right. This is not only dangerous, but it is absolutely fatal to the development of the highest Christian character.

The voice of conscience is always to be listened to. There is a worm, which does great damage to ships and to the timbers in bridges, known as the teredo or ship-worm. This worm bores into the wood, usually following the direction of the grain, so that a piece of wood into which one of these worms has bored is rendered weak and worthless because the grain, the fiber, that which gives the wood its strength, has been cut away. Conscience is the very fiber of character. Every time it is trifled with some of the strength of character is lost. Failure to heed its warnings is the teredo worm that destroys its grain, leaving the individual, inconsistent, vacillating, worse than worthless to the cause of Christ, and utterly miserable in himself. Heed conscience. Educate it by obeying its monitions, and by comparing what it approves and what it condemns with the character of Jesus, until the time comes when it, like the conscience of the Master, will be keyed to that most perfect of tones: "Father, glorify thy name."

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIAN NOURISHMENT.

TO be a Christian is to be natural. The only unnatural thing in this world is that which neither responds to God nor yields obedience to his laws. Sin is artificial, unnatural, something introduced into the world, and to be expelled because God is not its author. Much harm has resulted from reversing these positions; regarding sin as the natural state of man, and the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ as something which has come to us from another world; new and strange, so very different from that which really belongs to man that we must become other-worldly in order to be Christians.

I believe that this in no small measure accounts for the fact that to be a Christian has been often represented, and is usually perhaps considered, to be the most difficult thing that a human being can undertake; and that inconsistency in the Christian life is not to

be considered a serious fault, because to be a Christian is after all not a natural thing. This is an entirely false view. It is contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures. We are there taught that man is made in the image of God, and though he is a fallen man, yet we are also taught that he is God's child, and that *when he comes to himself* he sets his face toward his Father's house. The way of the transgressor is the one described as a rugged way, while the way of the wise one, the servant of God, is a way of pleasantness, the way of paths of peace.

I have no doubt that many things we permit ourselves to think and to do result from false ideas of what it means to be a Christian, and from a failure to recognize the truth that the most natural being in this world is not the unchristian, but the Christian man. Jesus is sometimes spoken of as the perfect flower of humanity. What do we mean by such language if we do not mean that man unfolding without sin, under the immediate influence of the Spirit of God, is after all the right way, the natural way for him to live, and that only can he become

what even the weakest of us feels he ought to become when this is done? Jesus seems to me a much more natural man than Nero. We speak of Nero as a monster, we speak of Jesus as the Son of man.

To be a Christian is then to be natural, for all nature, you know, is obedient to God, doing ceaselessly his holy will. Every living thing in nature must be nourished in order to be sustained. There are three dangers to be guarded against at this point—overfeeding, underfeeding, and poison. The digestive organs have no discrimination; they take whatever is given them, and work it up. If too much is given, indigestion, resulting ultimately in chronic dyspepsia, is the penalty; if too little is given, weakness, nervous prostration, complete debility, result; if poison is given, the very strength of the digestive organs is used to hasten death. These processes have their counterpart in the Christian life.

One of the dangers the young Christian is to guard against at the outset is overfeeding. I am now speaking of the average young person who has been converted in a

revival season and is full of a genuine desire to be of service to the Master. The Pharisees well illustrate what I mean. They were religious dyspeptics, people without any real spiritual health, though there was unceasing activity about things connected with true religion. With all the conventions, societies, meetings of all sorts one is called upon to attend, there is great danger of suffering from being overfed. The enthusiastic young Christian, feeling the strength of a new life, and anxious to do valiantly in the ranks he has now joined, is in peculiar danger here. The trouble is not that he will do these things, but that he will be apt to feed on these alone. The Pharisees were not condemned that they tithed mint, anise, and cummin, but they became so absorbed in these processes that they neglected judgment, mercy, and truth.

Another danger to be guarded against in Christian nourishment is feeding on one thing all the time. The strongest man if given only one thing to eat at each meal, three times a day, every day in the year, would soon lose his strength. There are

well-meaning persons who endeavor to feed Christians on a single doctrine. They insist that this is the whole truth of the Christian religion, and that if this is possessed and professed the end of a Christian life has been attained. No Christian can feed his soul on any single doctrine of the Christian religion alone without becoming a religious dyspeptic. People say often of a man who seems to be pious : "How unhappy that man appears to be, and how entirely without charity he is to those who differ from him in regard to some of his views." Even Martin Luther became so absorbed in contemplation of the great doctrine of justification by faith that the Epistle of St. James was looked upon by him as without any real value. However important any single doctrine may be, beware of feeding upon it alone.

Another, and perhaps a danger to which a still greater number are exposed, is that of underfeeding. There are those who have undertaken the impossible task of being Christians without belonging to any of the societies, attending any of the conven-

tions; absenting themselves with great consistency from the prayer meetings, attending church only once on Sunday, seldom reading the Bible, and only saying their prayers in a formal way. This is a sure road to spiritual starvation. Can a human being live on a single meal a week, even though it may be a sumptuous meal, served in the best manner, with the finest music playing all the time one is at the table? Suppose, however, the food though palatable is not really nutritious; can one live on good music and starch? Who would undertake to do any real work in the world on such fare? and can he do the Master's work who is spiritually fed after the same fashion? Remember, being a Christian is being natural; and it is not natural to try to live and grow strong without food.

Then there is danger of being poisoned. Many things are presented, especially to the young, which are recommended only in a negative way. They are not told that these things are good, but that they are not bad. "This will not hurt you" is a very poor

recommendation for anything. What I want to know is, will it do me good? The young life is so strong that it craves a great deal of food, and there is danger of its taking hold of these things thus negatively recommended and finding when it is too late that even from this point of view they have been deceived. That must not be fed upon which will not make us grow into the likeness of Jesus. The stronger a person is, the more intense he is, the more careful he should be of his spiritual food. He will, unless great care is exercised, find his soul fastening upon things that are destroying him, and even if he breaks away he will learn to his sorrow that he has lost not a little of his strength. One whom poison has come near putting an end to has never the same strength he had before. Ask of the food proposed for you: "Is it good? Is it nourishing? Will it enable me to grow in Christlikeness?" And when you are persuaded that each of these questions can be truthfully answered affirmatively, then eat.

I have called your attention to some of the dangers to which we are all exposed to a

greater or less degree ; now let me call your attention to the food which will nourish the soul. The first thing is prayer. By prayer I do not mean merely petition. There is a great deal in the Lord's prayer before we come to the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." Petition is a part of prayer, but by no means all. The nourishment to be obtained by the Christian through prayer is that which is derived by the consciousness that he is then in communion with God in an especial sense, and that there the divine life comes consciously close to his life. When one talks with God, then the reality of God is keenly felt, and the strength which that feeling engenders enables the child of God to go forth strong to do the Father's work. The great endurance of Moses was due to the fact that he saw the invisible. Elijah's courage can never be understood without pondering deeply the preface to his declaration as he stood before the sinning monarch and told him of the great drouth which was to come : "As the Lord God liveth, *before whom I stand*," said he. Now real prayer aids this consciousness of standing be-

fore God. Prayer is indeed feeding in the very palace of the King, on food such that he who feeds freely will become himself kingly. The great Christians of the world have all been men of prayer. St. Paul exhorted those to whom he wrote to surround themselves with, and live in, an atmosphere of prayer; and Jesus told his disciples to pray unwearyingly. Prayer keeps the windows of the soul open on the God side. It is really the only means of retaining that perfect sympathy with divine purposes which is indispensable to a healthy Christian life. How much time Jesus spent in prayer! Do you not remember how it is said of him that he would rise before the dawn and go out on the mountain to pray? If this communion with the Father in prayer was a necessity of his life, how much more necessary it is for us, for we have not the inherent strength of righteousness he had. He never for a moment failed in his allegiance to God, and yet he felt the need of constant prayer.

To be a Christian is to be like Christ, and to be like him is to feed on the same food, be nourished by the same life-giving stream

which flowed from the fountain of life ceaselessly into his soul. We must by prayer go often to this fountain and drink deep of its blessed waters. We are weak, not only by nature, but because we have weakened ourselves by sin; and we need therefore to be fed constantly on that food which is health-giving. We need, in a word, to live with God, to walk with the Master; but this is not possible without much deep, earnest prayer. What a privilege it is to have access to God always, to be the sons of a King who is never too busy to listen to and interest himself in all that concerns his youngest, weakest child!

Another means of Christian nourishment is meditation upon the word of God. The psalmist tells us again and again how the word of God is the food most delicious to him: it is sweeter than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb; it is more to be desired than all the things men usually strive for hardest. He tells us that in the night watches it forms food for reflection, and that at all times meditating upon it is his greatest delight. He tells us that the result

of such meditation is to give strength so that like the trees by the river he who meditates on the word will flourish. St. Paul, exhorts those to whom he writes to think on divine things.

One of the things we have to guard against especially, in our efforts at being Christians, is inconsistency. That which often astonishes us most is to see one in whom we had the utmost confidence, and whom despite some single evil action we believe to be a good man, do a thing which we knew he condemned. I believe that no little of the inconsistency in the lives of professing Christians is due to a lack of meditation on the word of God. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," does not merely mean that if a man thinks bad thoughts he is a bad man, and if he thinks good thoughts he is a good man. It means far more than this. I take it that the real meaning of it is that if a man accustoms himself to dwelling on the truth as it is in Jesus in his thoughts, meditating on the teachings of the Scriptures, especially on the life of Jesus, he will become Christlike.

This is the food that is to save us from vacillation. It is when we allow the things of time and sense to crowd out thoughts of the invisible, when we allow self to displace Christ in our thought, that we are guilty of those things which we despise, and which so affect us sometimes as to make us almost despair of ever being what we really desire to be. To bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ is the way to be strong, and the way to take captive these thoughts is by accustoming ourselves to meditate on God's word.

There is other food by which the soul is nourished, such as worship and Christian conversation. Let each have its place. Feed the soul on the food it needs, remembering that as the body is to be fed in order that it may enable you to do your work in the world most successfully, so the soul is to be fed on that which will make you strong for righteousness. Above all, feed most on the life of Jesus. "My body is meat indeed."

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTIAN GROWTH.

BEING a Christian is living a life, and not merely making a profession. When one is initiated into a secret society he is just as much a member as anyone else, and soon learns all that is to be known ; but joining the Church is by no means the end of Christian life. We are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. When one starts to be a Christian he enters upon a life which is day by day to grow fuller and richer, and which eternity itself will only suffice to complete. One can go to a university and there pursue some branch until he can claim that he has mastered it. He may learn more than anyone else has ever learned of that subject, and may justly claim to be a master. There is, however, but one master Christian, and that is Jesus ; all others are, and will ever be, his disciples. We are to grow more and more into his likeness.

In the last chapter I talked to you about food being essential for nourishment ; now I want to talk to you about the reason we are to desire to be nourished. It is not merely that we may live, but that we may grow. No Christian is ever to be satisfied with past attainments. The language of his soul should be : " I count not myself to have apprehended ; but one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth after the things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The supreme desire should be to grow up into Jesus, the living Head.

In order to do this, there must be exercise as well as food. Not a little is said about self-denial and cross-bearing in the Christian life. The object of this is that we may be strong, vigorous Christians, trained for the Master's service. A very essential part of this training is exercising ourselves in good works. While we are feeding we are obtaining fuel without which the engine could not be run ; but that is a poor engine which simply consumes the fuel, sending a very at-

tractive column of blue smoke up into the air, and throwing off steam in a way that says, "See how I might run," and yet which does not move either itself or anything else. There are people who quote a great deal of Scripture, and tell you that they have studied the Bible, who have, as they will tell you, "an experience," by which they mean they have received something, and yet who do almost nothing for the cause of Christ. Go back to these people after an absence of twenty years, and you will hear the same texts quoted and the same experience given. They are not growing. They are as were some to whom the great apostle to the Gentiles wrote, babes in Christ when they should be men.

No real spiritual development is to be expected without exercise. The Christian religion is sometimes treated as though being a Christian was like joining the Masons. In masonry you take certain degrees until at length you arrive at the point beyond which no Mason goes. You have gotten all that masonry has to offer. So there have been those, and unfortunately there are those still,

who speak of being a Christian as though it was a definite series of steps. They tell you that you must "get religion," and if certain things in your life do not square with their notions, then you must get more religion; just as though the path from earth to heaven was a series of platforms just so far apart, and being a Christian consisted in jumping from one of these to the other. They ask you, "Have you got religion? When did you get religion? Did you get it all, or did you stop before you got it all?" as if they had asked you, "Did you ever catch the measles? Did you have it mildly or severely?"

A man's Christian life is begun when he is born of the Spirit of God, and his real development begins when he realizes that he is God's child. When he reaches this point he is to begin to unfold, to develop in the Christian life just as he would, and does, in his life as related to this world merely. He takes naturally the food adapted to his nourishment, and the exercise necessary for strength and development. At first the babe is given his food. He does not know what is best

for him. Left to himself, the infant would put into his mouth as readily that which is destructive of life as that which is necessary to sustain life. So when one begins the Christian life it is necessary for him to put himself in the hands of, and under the direction of, those who have advanced to some extent in that life, and take the food and perform the duties that are pointed out to him. The exercise may at first be wearisome, and this is natural. Remember that you are really bringing into play a set of muscles hitherto almost entirely unused, or perhaps even used in the very opposite direction, so that they are not merely weak, but they are warped, even strong in a direction opposite to that to which they must now be turned.

Here is a man who all his life has walked with a bent back and a contracted chest. His muscles have hardened in that direction. He begins to have a cough, and the physician tells him that he must walk erect, that his lungs must have room. He makes the effort, aided by strong shoulder-braces; but even then he walks erect with the greatest

difficulty, and feels a fatigue greater than he ever felt. Let him persevere. After awhile he will find his strength sufficient to enable him to walk without the fatigue, and eventually he will be able to dispense with the braces, his muscles having become braces themselves, such that he walks erect without being conscious of it, or needing such restraints. This is the way it is with those who enter the Christian life. They have been living a selfish, contracted life. Being a Christian requires enlargement, expansion. They are given things to do which to them are difficult tasks. They shrink from these things. "Why should I deny myself? Why should I take up my cross?" The reason, my dear friend, is that you have grown in the wrong direction, and now you have to have these things as aids. After awhile, if you follow Jesus, that which is now a difficult thing will be an easy thing. You will possess so much strength, so much vigor, so much vitality, that things which to you at the beginning of your Christian life are simply impossible will be done by you not only with ease, but with delight. This re-

sult is only to be obtained by feeding upon the nourishing food I have spoken of, and taking proper spiritual exercise; exercising yourself in those works in which Jesus spent his glorious life, and which the Church of Christ is in the world to carry on—the great work of showing men the Father. The monkish system of rigorous discipline is simply this idea carried to an extreme.

The first condition of growth in the right direction is health. Being a Christian is being sane, using the word both in the ordinary sense of mental soundness and in the original sense of general soundness. The morbid, diseased Christian is as unfit for the work of the Master as the diseased body is unfit for much of the work of the world. That man who expects to grow must seek spiritual health. He has at hand the means for obtaining this: it is to walk with Him who gives abundant life to all who follow him. Seek the companionship of the best human beings you can associate with. What one needs for health is to be in a healthful atmosphere. Somewhere in Germany, I have heard, there is a village, or more prop-

erly a farming community, of exceptionally sound people. To this place many who are insane are sent. Only one insane person is sent to a house. There he becomes an inmate of the home. He is surrounded by cheerfulness, by vigor, by health, by kindness, until in many cases he is completely cured. This is a thoroughly rational process: make people well by surrounding them with health. This is the process for the Christian; in order to be a healthy Christian, you must live in an atmosphere of health. Fortunately, you can have this atmosphere anywhere, for God is everywhere. There is no place on earth where one may not have access to him, where one may not be overshadowed by his presence and filled with his Spirit. Then there is the Bible with its wealth of truth, a fountain of health for all.

A danger to be guarded against at this point is that of seeking health in the wrong place. When one has a cold, everybody he meets is ready with a remedy. If a child is sick, all the neighbors want to prescribe. This is very kind in the neighbors; but if all the prescriptions are given, it is likely to re-

sult in the death of the child. When men are feeling their way in the Christian life, not quite certain about their ground, there are well-meaning people who are ready to tell you at once what you need. Listen to them respectfully, but only as you would listen to a friend who told you how to cure your cold. If the one who talks to you is himself so near your ideal of what a Christian ought to be that you feel him to be one who has sufficient understanding of your needs to be able to prescribe for you, then take his advice, but be careful. There are a great many quacks in religion as in other things, and they are as ready with their "isms" as others are with their nostrums to dose everyone who comes near. Your spiritual life is too valuable a thing to be put in peril after this fashion. In your difficulties, in your conscious weakness, go to the one person you know who seems to you to be the most Christlike, tell him your symptoms, and ask advice. Go as you would go to a wise physician, and talk as you would talk to such a physician. Go especially to your Bible, and there study Jesus as he dealt with those

who came to him diseased. Go to him, the Great Physician, and ask him to give you what you need, and to show you the path to spiritual health. Do these things, and verily you shall live; and because you have health, your Christian life will be a delight.

A healthful Christian is necessarily a growing Christian. Growth is one of the things that cannot be hid. The man who grows knows that he is growing, and others know it also. The consciousness that we are growing is one of the delightful things in the Christian life. An artist has been studying nature diligently for years. He has watched the effect of changing seasons on the woods and fields; he has watched the clouds in the storm, and the sky when flooded with sunlight. One evening he looks at the sunset and sees something he never saw before. There is a new beauty in it all, grander, more elevating, more wonderful than anything he has ever before seen; and with the glow of this revelation of loveliness in his soul, he takes his brush and paints the picture of his life. What does it all mean? Is it that there has never been such a sunset

before? Ah! no; it is that the soul of the artist has grown, and he sees to-day what he had hitherto been incapable of seeing. The musician has been working for years. One day he begins for the five-hundredth time to go over one of the great creations of Beethoven. Suddenly it seems to him as if the very voice of the Master spoke to him and told him the meaning of the music. A friend standing near says: "Is that something new you have there? It is very beautiful; I never heard it before." He smiles, and says: "Yes, it is new to me to-day, though the music was written before either of us was born." The simple truth is that the man has been growing. You take up a book you have not looked at for ten years. You do not expect it to interest you, because you remember that ten years ago a friend told you to get it and read it, and it was well worth careful reading, and trusting the judgment of your friend you got it, but had to confess that it failed to interest you. To-day you are surprised to find yourself so fascinated that you are unable to put the book away from you. You wonder that

you did not see its beauties before. The reason is simply that you have now grown up to the book. These same delights, only in far greater measure, come to the Christian. One day, after having served God earnestly and to the best of his ability for years, he is on his knees in prayer, or walking in the field, or comforting a sorrowing one, or leading a soul to the Master, or quietly reading and meditating upon God's holy word, when there comes to him a vision of God like a revelation. He has never seen God after this fashion before. Does it mean that now he is a Christian for the first time? Does it mean that he is now converted? Does it mean that he is now sanctified? I am sure that the real meaning of this experience is that he is growing. He has reached that point in his spiritual development in which it is possible for him to have a vision of God which he could not have earlier. Not that God does not always stand revealed to him who can see, but because he was heretofore incapable of seeing so much of God. Did not Jesus see the Father as no other eye saw him? And to-day, are there not

visions of God granted to him who is most like the Master which are utterly impossible to others? The sunset is no respecter of persons, and yet the artist sees what the in-artistic eye is utterly incapable of seeing. The music of the great musician, the poetry of the great poet, can only speak to kindred souls. The pure in heart see God. The man who is growing in grace and in the *knowledge* of God is the one to whom comes ever new visions of the Father, ever new revelations of the loveliness, of the attractiveness of Jesus, and of the consequent delights of the Christian life.

It is a great pity and a great mistake to point to these times of open vision as to definite experiences which are to be obtained by some clearly defined process. If they are to be genuine and profitable; if each one is to be not only a vision, but a promise and a prophecy of what is still to come, they must be the result not of abnormal conditions, but of healthy, natural growth. The Christian life is natural. I do not think this can be too much insisted upon. Its processes are not unlike those with which we are familiar

in every department of life. The poet who for the first time saw the beauties of Shakespeare's "As You Like It" would say to the child who came to him saying that he saw no beauty in it: "Wait, study, learn; and when your mind grows under wise training, you will see all that I now see, and perhaps even more than anyone has seen." So I am sure the way to treat one who has begun the Christian life, but who knows nothing scarcely of the experience which he hears related by others, is to say: "Wait; study Jesus, follow him very closely; in time there will be given to you a revelation of the truth such as perhaps no other has yet seen." These things cannot be forced. Do not try to make yourself see what you have heard others say they see, or to make yourself feel what they claim to feel. Compare your condition with others, if you desire, but especially ask yourself whether Jesus is more to you to-day than ever; and if you are sure that he is, that each day he is more precious, and the desire to be like him is more and more ardent, do not become discouraged; for this is an evidence of growth, and the time

will come when you will see far more clearly than you now do. It may be a revelation that shall overwhelm ; it is more likely to be a quiet opening to you of a new view of the truth which shall enrich you and strengthen you so as to fit you better for the Master's work. The way to grow is not by any artificial process, but by the simple, faithful following of Jesus.

In his chamber all alone,
Kneeling on the floor of stone,
Prayed the monk in deep contrition
For his sins of indecision,
Prayed for greater self-denial
In temptation and in trial;
It was noonday by the dial,
And the monk was all alone.

Suddenly, as if it lightened,
An unwonted splendor brightened
All within him and without him
In that narrow cell of stone;
And he saw the Blessèd Vision
Of our Lord, with light Elysian
Like a vesture wrapped about him,
Like a garment round him thrown.

It was now the appointed hour
When alike in shine or shower,
Winter's cold or summer's heat,

To the convent portals came
All the blind and halt and lame,
All the beggars of the street,
For their daily dole of food
Dealt them by the brotherhood;
And their almoner was he
Who upon his bended knee,
Wrapt in silent ecstasy
Of divinest self-surrender,
Saw the Vision and the splendor.
Deep distress and hesitation
Mingled with his adoration;
Should he go, or should he stay?

.
Straightway to his feet he started,
And with longing look intent
On the Blessèd Vision bent,
Slowly from his cell departed,
Slowly on his errand went.

.
Through the long hour intervening
It had waited his return,
And he felt his bosom burn,
Comprehending all the meaning,
When the Blessèd Vision said,
“Hadst thou stayed, I must have fled.”

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTIAN CULTURE.

IT is not infrequently thought that to be a Christian is to lead a very narrow, contracted life. Such a conception of Christianity is erroneous. The largest life that a human being can live is the Christian life. It is true that there have been very narrow individuals who have called themselves Christians, and who were Christians; yet they were no more true types of what the Christian religion is intended to make of one than a man with withered legs and arms is what bodily life is intended to be. A man with one idea, bigoted, narrow, and fanatical, has at times appeared to be necessary in the development of the Christian religion. It has been necessary to call especial attention to particular forms of evil, and men who have not realized that anything else was evil have gone flaming through the land enlightening the people and arousing them at this point. The narrow-gauge railroad

that runs through some of the defiles of the mountains carries the traveler to places no broad-gauge road reaches, but for all that it is not the ideal railroad. That narrow men are both needed at times and can be used to great advantage to advance the cause of Christ, does not show that the cause is narrow, but on the contrary that it is very large to be able to use those who possess one talent as well as those who have five. But we are to remember that we are not expected in his service to bury the one because we have no more. What we have was given to trade with, to improve, to cultivate. The ideal Christian man is the man of widest, best culture. Whether general culture is possible to him or not, in order to be a Christian in the best sense of the word he must be a man who cultivates assiduously all the Christian graces, and whose life shows harmonious development of the fruits of the Spirit.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” is not to be construed as teaching that faith is only an appropriating grace. The initial act of faith

in the beginning of the Christian life is that by which the grace of God extended to us in Jesus Christ is appropriated, and we then become the sons of God ; but this is only the beginning, by no means to be looked upon as the end of Christian life. Faith is to be regarded henceforward as the regulative principle of the life. We walk by faith : not a blind, unreasoning reliance on an unknown power, but a reasonable faith in a present, living Christ—a faith which not only receives his blessings, but which by obedience honors his laws.

Having taken Jesus Christ by faith to be our personal Saviour, then comes the work of development. Says St. Peter : “In your faith supply virtue ; and in your virtue, knowledge ; and in your knowledge, temperance ; and in your temperance, patience ; and in your patience, godliness ; and in your godliness, love of the brethren ; and in your love of the brethren, love.”

Faith in Jesus is never to exclude self-reliance and energy on the part of his followers. The man of faith is by no means the one who sits idly about, waiting for

some especial message from the Master to tell him what to do. On the contrary he sets about doing at once the duty which lies next to him, believing that his Master wants him to be actively engaged in that work which, because of its very nature, must be his. So in the words quoted above we are told, "In your faith supply virtue," active excellence, energy. Beginning with an appropriating faith, the Christian is to go on growing until he develops an energetic faith. He is never to cease appropriating, but his very power to appropriate is really conditioned by the use to which he puts that which he already has. It is the planted grain of mustard seed that grows, the grain which is not only in a position to do so, but which actually does take hold of all those things in soil and atmosphere which are necessary to change the tiny seed into the vigorous plant.

It may not be amiss to pause a little while here, and say some things about this word faith. It has a great many meanings both in the Bible and in religious writings. When we are told, "Believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," it is as I have pointed out above, appropriating faith. It is that reaching out of the soul which says, "I will take Jesus at his word, accept him as my Saviour." Faith then becomes that by which we recognize ourselves as the children of God. In the words "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience," the word faith is used to include the whole scheme of Christianity; it stands for the religion of Jesus Christ, and it is as if the writer had spoken of holding the truth as taught by Jesus in a pure conscience. When the Master says to his disciples, "Have faith in God," he means to teach them that God is to be trusted implicitly in all things. The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives us an account of the works wrought, the sufferings endured, the dangers dared by those who had faith in God and in Jesus Christ our Lord.

No Christian culture contemplates a development of faith so that the Christian man's faith shall include all these different phases. It is no narrow, supine, supersti-

tious belief, but an active, earnest, reasonable, energetic faith in him who is over all, God blessed forever. It is a faith which is strong enough to enable one to abandon the old life of sin for the new life of righteousness. It is a faith which does not ask for freedom from hardship, and does not shrink at self-denial. It merely asks, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and then when the word comes, whether it be to preach the gospel in Judea or to go among the Gentiles; whether it be to stay at home and pursue the business which until the present has claimed the attention, or to abandon it for something else; whether it be to surrender things which were very precious and were deemed essential to happiness, possibly essential even to content, and to embrace those things and perform those duties which hitherto were accounted unlovely or distasteful, still so to trust him as without question to obey his commands. Faith is thus to be developed until it excludes doubt. This was the kind of faith manifested in the life of St. Paul; this was the faith of Luther; this was the faith that

characterized John Wesley. This large, active faith has been the foundation of every great Christian character. It was, as was every other grace, more perfectly developed in the Master than in any other. There is a calm confidence in his tone when he says, "My Father," which points him out not only as the Son of God, but as one who was always conscious of the relationship. His faith in God was so great that even in that dread hour when the very light of heaven itself seemed to grow dim, and the blessed presence which had ever seemed so near appeared to be withdrawing into the darkness, he could still say in the fullness of a faith which did not have then the clearest open vision, which triumphed over suffering of the flesh and the worse suffering of the presence and the power of human ingratitude, "Father, forgive them." Jesus is the Master of the faith, and Christian culture contemplates a development of faith which shall be satisfied with no lower ideal.

"In your faith supply energy." Faith is not merely that power which enables us to suffer in God's cause, and for the Master's

sake, but which enables us to work for him. By faith men wrought righteousness and stopped the mouths of lions as well as endured all manner of hardship. The faith the Christian is to have is that which can be still when one is required to wait, and can move with energy and dispatch when that is demanded. It is a faith so developed that it can cross seas and traverse deserts, or bow in Gethsemane in submission to the Father's will. Faith is not merely a passive virtue, it has a very important active side. "In your faith supply energy."

St. Paul said on one occasion of certain people: "I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." It seems, from this, possible that there may be an energetic faith which is not a wise faith; hence we are told not merely to supply energy, but in that energy knowledge. The zeal manifested by the cultured Christian is to be both earnest and wise. Not a little harm has been done to the cause of Christ by men who were very earnest, very energetic, but exceedingly unwise. Christianity demands wisdom. "In your

virtue supply knowledge." Christian activity is not to be governed by mere feeling or impulse, but is to be a wisely directed energy. No man has a whit more spiritual muscle than is needed, and if he wastes his strength in unwise effort he will have nothing left when demand is made for legitimate work.

It is far easier to be carried away with enthusiasm for some cause and plunge headlong into it, and even sacrifice oneself for it, than it is to be calmly courageous at all times, having convictions of duty based upon faith and knowledge. Such a position often causes one to be misunderstood. He is at times, because he does both know and believe, forced to take the most unpopular of all grounds, the middle ground. He is too conservative for the radicals, and too radical for the conservatives. Such a man, however, during important crises, is the safety of the Church. He acts as a break-water for both parties.

We are to guard here against two dangers. One is a knowledge which seeks ever to know, but never arrives at any de-

cision. There are a great many Christians who say, "I would do certain things, if I only knew." How then can we know so as to have a zeal according to knowledge? The only volume, aside from the common sense with which we are endowed, is the life of Jesus. We are to study it constantly until we are so well acquainted with him that we will have little if any doubt as to the course to be pursued. There is at this point in the Christian life not a little Christian agnosticism. "I would be zealous," some say, "if I only could be certain that this was the thing I ought to do." Our answer to all such is this: Study Jesus—what it seems most reasonable that such a character as he would do under the circumstances; and then, with a prayer to God for his blessing on the effort, do that thing.

There is another danger, and that is, there are those who say there is nothing to be learned. They claim immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit for their actions. It is a very serious thing for any human being to claim to be immediately and infallibly inspired by the Holy Ghost. When one dis-

believes, he makes God a liar; and it is equally true that he makes God a liar when he represents him as saying, or as commanding, that which he has neither said nor commanded.

Have faith, but do not despise knowledge. Because certain things are said to have been hidden from the wise and prudent, do not at once leap to the conclusion that wisdom and prudence are to be despised. "With all thy getting, get understanding." "In your faith supply knowledge."

Nor are we to stop here. An energetic faith, a wise faith, these will accomplish wonders, but more is needed for the Christian. Remember, the Christian man is really the largest man, and hence the widest, the most complete culture is demanded. "In your knowledge supply self-control." No life can be its best without self-control.

In thinking of self-control we are not to limit the idea to the control of our tempers. We are not to think that because under strong provocation we restrain ourselves, uttering no hasty word, doing no ill-advised thing, that therefore we know what self-con-

trol means and have acquired it. This is a great deal, but the self-control the Christian must learn means far more than this. It means power rightly to direct every faculty of the nature. It means having the whole self under the dominion of a will which is itself in harmony with the will of God. Let us study Jesus here, and see what self-control meant in his life.

We are given a picture of him before the incarnation in which he is represented as one having the form of God, and yet thinking it not a thing to be grasped at to be even on an equality with God. We are told that he relinquishes this high position and takes upon himself the form of a servant and is made in the likeness of man, and becomes obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Think for a moment what self-control is here exhibited: occupying the highest conceivable position, yet having enough control over himself to lay aside all the splendors of that position that he might manifest that love of God which the world needed to know in order to be saved. It is the king having such perfect control over him-

self that he can lay aside all the insignia of royalty in order to save his subjects.

Do you see what I mean? We are held by circumstances, by position, by association. We are largely under the dominion of our surroundings. One object of Christian culture is to enable us to acquire such control over ourselves that we shall be able to carry ourselves anywhere, and to do with ourselves anything that is for the glory of the God we serve. It means that we are to learn that the highest dignity is to be workers together with God, that the greatest glory is to be like Christ. We are to acquire such self-control that if we are in a conspicuous position and the cause of Christ demands it, we shall carry ourselves cheerfully into obscurity; if we are kings and the building up of God's kingdom on earth demands it, we shall become servants of servants.

Is not the bare possibility of obtaining such control over ourselves a glorious thing to contemplate? Instead of being under the dominion of appetite, of passion, of evil habit, we should be under dominion to our

best selves with such power of self-direction that so soon as any duty is demanded of us there shall be response throughout our entire nature. "In your knowledge supply self-control."

Even this is not all that Christian culture demands. "In your self-control supply patience." Christianity demands of its votaries the possession and the development of all the active virtues, but it does not propose to ignore or to neglect the passive virtues. To do nothing but work, to do nothing but wait—either of these is comparatively easy. The real difficulty of life is to work and wait. To desire ardently something which you feel you can by no legitimate means possess yourself of to-day; to realize that the thing is not only in itself good, but that it would really make you more serviceable in the world to possess it; and then to bide God's time not only without murmuring, but also throw yourself into the work of to-day without letting the shadow of this unfulfilled desire affect the quality of that work, is what the Christian virtue of patience is to enable one to do. To acquire

this patience is one of the objects of Christian discipline, one of the results of Christian culture. Patience is not to be confounded with idly, listlessly waiting for something to happen. It is on the contrary an essential element in every virtue. It is the conservative element; it is that which preserves integrity in the midst of trials. Whatever else the Christian may have attained unto, if he have not patience his whole character is in danger of disintegration. His love must be patient when there are those providences which the Father does not explain to his child. His faith must be patient even should there come an hour so dark that he cries out in agony of the deepest kind, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" His hope must be patient even though disappointment be added to disappointment day after day.

What a power in the world for good is one who under the influence of the life and teachings of Jesus, and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, has added grace to grace, growing, developing, cultivating the character until he possesses these qualities

not in the germ merely, but in great perfection !

It would seem that Christian culture might end here, but it does not. To be a Christian is a great deal ; it is to possess the most completely developed character possible, hence nothing is to be omitted which would serve for such development. The curriculum pointed out by the apostle Peter is the one to follow if we really desire to learn what it means to be a Christian. Jesus is the Great Teacher in the school, and the things of which I have been speaking are the things he teaches. Yes, there is more : "In your patience supply love for the brethren."

You are not the only Christian. There is a household of faith, and there are duties to be recognized toward all the children of the Father. There have been times in the history of Christianity when it was thought that the most perfect Christian culture could be obtained by going out of the world, separating oneself from all the common pursuits of life and being wholly given up to spiritual culture. It was forgotten, or per-

haps not realized, that one very essential part of that culture was to be obtained by contact with others, and by performing those duties which as children of the common Father, forming one household of faith, we owe to one another. The duties are not to be performed in any heartless, perfunctory manner; but in order that they may be really helpful, they are to be saturated with love. It is not the kindness shown to a brother, not the act performed, but the spirit behind the act, the love shining through it all, that transfigures it and makes the one to whom the service has been rendered oftentimes nobler as well as happier.

We are not to be satisfied with showing love to the brethren, though. "In your love for the brethren supply love." There is another obligation. All are God's children, for he is the Father; and one very necessary thing in the Christian life is a recognition of this truth, and showing that we do recognize it by loving service to those who know him not.

What a glorious thing it is to take these

characters of ours to the school of Christ and there learn of him those things which make us both serviceable to our fellow-men here and meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light! Perhaps it seems to you that you can never attain unto this, that the standard is too high. It is true that unaided such culture would be impossible; but if we will sit at his feet, he will teach us faith, that shall exclude doubt; energy, that is untiring in the service of God and man; knowledge, that shall make us wise unto salvation, and enable us also to lead many to him; self-control, by means of which the entire nature shall be responsive to the demands of the Father; patience, conserving every virtue and keeping us sweet under every trial; love, which shall be peculiarly tender, and yet which shall be a mighty force in our own lives and shall powerfully affect for good the lives of those about us. Nothing demands more attention, nor is anything worthy of more painstaking care, than Christian culture, by means of which the character becomes symmetrical, becomes indeed Christlike.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTIAN INSPIRATION.

NO life can be a success without inspiration. There must be something always breathing into the life to vitalize its energy, to enable it to endure, and also to persevere. The painter may be inspired by a passion for his art, by a desire to have his pictures hung in the great galleries of the world, by the example of those who have enriched the world with the products of their genius ; but whatever may be the source of his inspiration, he must have inspiration if he is to achieve success.

Now the Christian life must have its inspiration, and as it is the largest life and makes greater demands on us than any other, inasmuch as it demands the entire self, it must have the largest, the noblest possible inspiration. As Jesus is the example, the ideal, the model, so also is he the inspiration of the Christian. "Without me ye can do nothing," is his word to those who follow

him; and "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," is the disciple's response to this statement.

Perhaps from what I have said it may seem to you that your nature is so small that you can never be this great thing. You feel in the presence of such a one as Jesus that you are too utterly insignificant to hope to be what you believe that a Christian should be. With Jesus as the inspiration of the life, there is no need of despair. Suppose your nature is small; he is great, and can make even a grain of mustard seed into a tree.

Jesus is our inspiration in the development of Christian character. In him "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." He inspires us by the perfection of his character to be satisfied with no low attainments. Is it possible for the musician to study Beethoven and then be content with mere jingle for music? Can a painter study Raphael, make the great colorist his master, and not catch at least this much of his spirit, that he will be unwilling to do poor work? So the

Christian, recognizing Jesus always as the Master, as he studies that wonderful, powerful, patient life; that life which had one single supreme purpose, the highest possible purpose in the universe, to glorify God—can he study this life and come under its influence without catching something of its inspiration? But how much better if he deliberately seeks it; if the mind which was in Christ Jesus is the mind he seeks; if he looks constantly at Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith.

Without the inspiration of the life of the Master, and the consciousness of his presence with us and his sympathy for us, the life which I have tried to describe as the Christian life is utterly impossible. With him all is different. No man can walk with him day by day without growing in grace; aye, without desiring above all things to be like him. He inspires us by his ineffable sweetness with the deliberate purpose to cultivate ourselves up to the highest possible point of Christian character. In every scale of music there is a dominant tone, there is a tone that is felt as the rightful ruler of the

scale, there is a note that is recognized as the dominating influence in every chord. In the same way, in every life there is a dominant principle, a dominant passion often. The question is not, Shall we have this, or shall we not? We have it, and must ever have it. The only thing to settle is, What shall the dominant be? With some who are in the Christian life it is a doctrine; with some it is a form of service; with others it is some single reform. Each one of these no doubt has its place, but he who is to live the life which I mean when I speak of being a Christian must have Jesus for the dominant. No one doctrine of the Christian religion is sufficient for the inspiration of the Christian life, for there are things which arise in life for which the single doctrine is insufficient. No one grace, not even the grace of love, if you can conceive of it as dissociated from faith and hope, is sufficient for this inspiration. There will never come a time in all eternity that we will be able to dispense with faith in God; nor will there come a time, even though the revelations may and doubtless will so far transcend the pres-

ent powers of the mind to imagine them that effort in that direction is worse than useless, and although there will be glorious experiences which so far transcend all that we can now understand even of the most glowing descriptions of the glories of the future that these descriptions will fade into utter insignificance in the presence of the reality, still we will not be able to dispense with hope, for as long as God is infinite there is something for his children beyond. So that no single grace is to be taken, no single doctrine is to be relied upon to give inspiration in the Christian life. Nothing less will suffice than Jesus himself.

Not only is Jesus thus the inspiration in the development of the character, but he is also the inspiration in the demands that are made upon us in being Christians. "Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." We are inspired to endurance through the example of Jesus in the presence of trials so far greater than ours that what we suffer is not to be compared with what he passed through. His

very largeness of nature made it possible for him to be tempted in all points like as we are. Consider for a moment what this means. Each one has *his* temptations. Some trials come to my neighbor which do not come to me; some to me of which he knows nothing. Take all the possibilities of temptation of a dozen of the largest natures of the men and women you know; take the capacity for suffering which belongs to the entire human race. Now remember that Jesus is the Son of man; remember that he had within himself this capacity to suffer, and that there is not an agony save that which results from failure of allegiance to God which he did not know. He was tested in *all points* like as we are. That is to say, there is not a human being to-day who has to suffer who has not a sympathizer in Jesus, because he suffered in the same way. What an inspiration is his perfect fidelity in suffering to us when we realize this! How close he comes to us, and how much lighter the burden feels when we can look into his face and know that he, whose followers we are, never for a moment

faltered nor shifted the burden upon another, but instead bore the very burden of the world itself.

He is our inspiration in the demands made upon us for fidelity in the position in which we are placed in the providence of God. He came into the world to save the world. In order to do this he had, in the completest sense, to give himself to the world. His gift was not at the time appreciated, but it was not on that account withdrawn. He came for the purpose of saving men by giving himself to them; and if they were so blind to their own interests as to crucify him, in fidelity to his great purpose, for the sake of the salvation of these very people, he will permit them to do as they list. The hardest of trials is, when one is striving to be true, to be misunderstood; maligned perhaps by foes, and treated with a coolness more unendurable than malignity by friends. In such severe trials he and he alone can be our inspiration. In times of suffering, in times of affliction, in times of trial, in times when demands such as you never expected are made upon you in your efforts to be

faithful to the trust committed to your care, in your efforts to be a Christian, look to Jesus, who "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down upon the right hand of the throne of God." "We have not a high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; therefore let us come boldly to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." It was because Jesus was his inspiration that Luther faced without fear the diet at Worms. It was because Jesus was his inspiration that John Wesley fearlessly faced the mobs, and in the presence of an opposition greater than that which most men have been called upon to encounter preached the gospel of Jesus Christ and awakened an interest in pure religion and undefiled such that Dean Farrar, of Canterbury, says: "To Wesley was mainly granted the task for which he was set apart by the hands of invisible consecration, the task which even an archangel might have envied him, of awak-

ening a mighty revival of the religious life in those dead pulpits, in that slumbering Church, in that corrupt society. His was the religious sincerity which not only founded the Wesleyan community, but, working through the heart of the very Church which had despised him, flashed fire into her whitening embers. . . . His was the voice which sounding forth over the valley of dry bones cried, ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’” It was because Jesus was his inspiration that the apostle Paul wrote: “We are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed. . . . For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” To be a Christian is impossible without this inspiration.

CHAPTER VII.

CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY.

A MAN is a lawyer, or a physician, or a merchant because he prefers being that. He goes into it with no thought of any other than himself, and with no especial purpose aside from doing that which is congenial to his tastes, and in which he feels that he can make a success. Being a Christian is unlike this. A man is not to attempt to be a Christian simply for his own sake. The Christian religion was never intended to make us so narrow that our only object in being Christians might be to save our souls. This is no doubt a very important thing for one to consider, but it is by no means all that he is to consider.

I have thus far spoken of the Christian in himself, and I now desire especially to have you think of the Christian in reference to others. Being a Christian, so far as the world is concerned, is to show Jesus to the

world. This purpose has at times been hidden by other things. At one time it is lost in an elaborate ritual; at another it is obscured by efforts to explain to men the nature of God, or the Trinity, or the nature of some other utterly inexplicable thing connected with the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not be troubled because I say inexplicable thing. You know there are very few things that we can explain. If I am speaking of love, and the hearers ask me to explain it I cannot do so; I can only ask if they have ever loved. If they have not, there is no language by which I can explain to them its real nature. I can show them living examples, and still they will never really know until they love. No man can explain the nature of God, but every man may know God as the Father. No man can explain the mystery of the Trinity, but every man may know God as his Father, the Holy Spirit as his Guide, and Jesus Christ as his Saviour from sin and death. Christian activity consists in showing to the world a life in which these relations are recognized and honored, and not

in attempting to explain the nature of the great God to whom we are thus related.

In the great desire to save the world Christians have expended much energy, sometimes wisely, sometimes unwisely. Oftener than otherwise the direct effort has been made through enunciating certain doctrines and then declaring that these must be accepted if a man desired to be saved. The world has been regarded at times as a sick man who had a will of his own, and although told that the medicine prescribed was greatly needed by him, and that unless he took it he would surely die, yet it was recognized that he could refuse the dose and throw the bottle out of the window did he choose to do so. At other times the world has been regarded as a child, and the attempt made to give the medicine without asking any questions or recognizing any right to do anything save swallow the dose. This process might serve to create a uniform creed which, when accepted by a sufficient number of people, is called orthodoxy, but it is far from accomplishing the great work that the Master desires his followers

to perform. He was by no means indifferent to what was believed by the people to whom he came, but he did not undertake to save the world by having the world swallow any number of articles of faith. He lived his life before men, and then pointing to it, to his active beneficence, he told them to believe on the Father who cared for them. It was first the life, and then the teaching. Being a Christian is living a life, for that is after all the most effective way of teaching. Suppose a dozen men are standing watching a fire. The fire company is active, and every effort is made to extinguish the flames, but it is soon seen that the house is doomed. Presently at the third-story window a little child appears. She had been lost sight of, each member of the family thinking that she was with some other. The stairs are already in an exceedingly dangerous condition, and to go after the child is to risk life. Now one of the dozen men of whom I have spoken begins to talk. He sees the child as do the others. He is a very eloquent man, and he begins to speak of heroism. He defines the word, telling first what it is not,

and then what it is. He begins to illustrate it. He urges men to display heroism on all occasions where such a display is possible, and in the meantime the roof falls in and the child is burned to death. Those who heard him said afterwards that his words were very eloquent, but we notice that he did nothing heroic, and there was not power enough in his eloquence to make a single one of those men risk his life to save the child. Suppose, however, instead of discussing the nature of heroism, so soon as the child's danger is recognized, without a word to anyone, he rushes into the house, snatches the little one from the very jaws of death, and brings it in safety to the mother. Will not the single act do more to promote a spirit of heroism in the people about him than the best definition either he or another could possibly give? It is no doubt very necessary for the Church to have a creed; theologians must have a creed; some individuals need to have clearly defined ideas of what they do and what they do not believe; but what the world wants is life, and being a Christian meets this want.

Christian activity is simply the outward evidence of the fact that one is a Christian. It was the life of Jesus which was the light of men. It is by manifesting the Christ-life that men are to be saved. A man may get away from arguments about hell or heaven, his intellect may refuse to entertain the notion of a God who suffers and dies upon a cross, but no man can get away from the logic of nobility of character. Gentleness, kindness, unselfishness, devotion even to the ungrateful, this is an argument from which the world cannot escape. So we find men who profess to despise the Church and to admire and even to reverence Jesus. If they are honest, then they can be won for him by his life manifesting itself actively in the lives of his followers. Being a Christian means to go into a home where there is need of sympathy and making the inmates feel that in you they have a friend. This can never be done by any mere words. It cannot be done by ostentatious gifts. He who does these things must not lift up his voice, nor cry, nor be heard in the streets. There are those in the world who have never seen

anything but the world's back. The cold shoulder has been turned to them from the hour of their birth. They were cursed with the first conscious breath of the mother when she brought them into being. If they have any father, they know not who or where he is. They have been brought up to regard society as their enemy and all men and women as legitimate prey. Being a Christian means showing to such people that God loves even them, not by telling them so in so many words, but by living a life of love toward them. The problem of home and foreign missions is not the problem of men, or of orthodoxy, or of money, but of life.

The Christian life is the complete life; every other is but a fragmentary life. Christian activity is to manifest itself in efforts to show these broken lives how they can be made whole, these fragmentary lives how to find and where to find completeness. A man comes one day into an old shop, and there in a corner he finds some strangely-shaped pieces of wood. He looks at them eagerly, and asks the owner of the shop if he

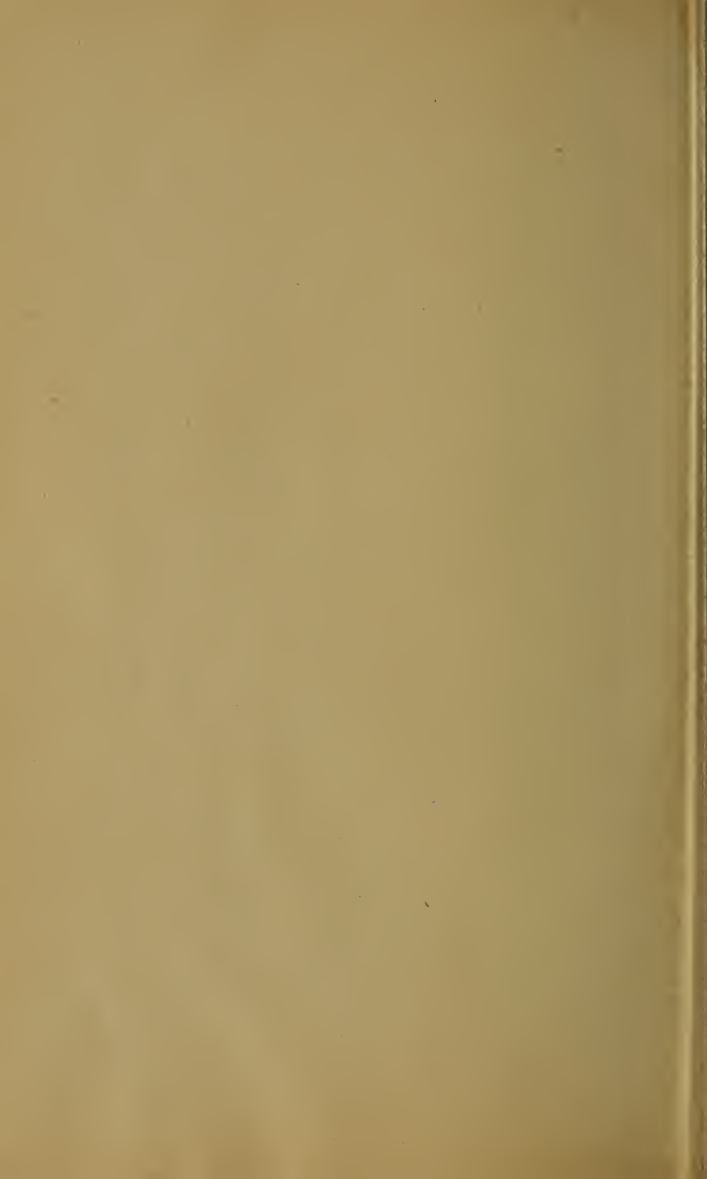
will sell them. "Oh, yes," says the owner, not at all understanding the light in the man's face nor the eagerness of his tones, "I will sell them for a small sum; they are only curious bits of wood, not worth much, I suppose." The stranger pays the few pennies asked, takes the bits of wood in his hands as tenderly as though he were carrying a sleeping babe, and goes on his way. A few days after he comes back to the shop. Taking a violin from beneath his cloak he begins to play. Such tones, such music! The old man has never heard anything like it in his life. It seems to him that the instrument must have within itself some strange power, and that the man playing it must be more than a man. He is by turns thrilled with the wildest emotion, compelled to laugh, compelled to weep, compelled merely to listen breathless to music which seems to fill the air of the old shop with the radiance of heaven, and he peers into the corners almost expecting to see angel faces looking into his. Suddenly he seems to be swept from his feet. He is carried away out into the deep woods, and as the rippling

notes fall from the violin bow he seems to be listening to the dashing of a waterfall and to see a rainbow form in the pure white spray. Presently the music ceases, and the old man asks where the violinist obtained an instrument of such marvelous power and sweetness. Looking lovingly at his instrument the musician says: "It is the one I got from you. The broken pieces of wood are the violin; I merely put them together again."

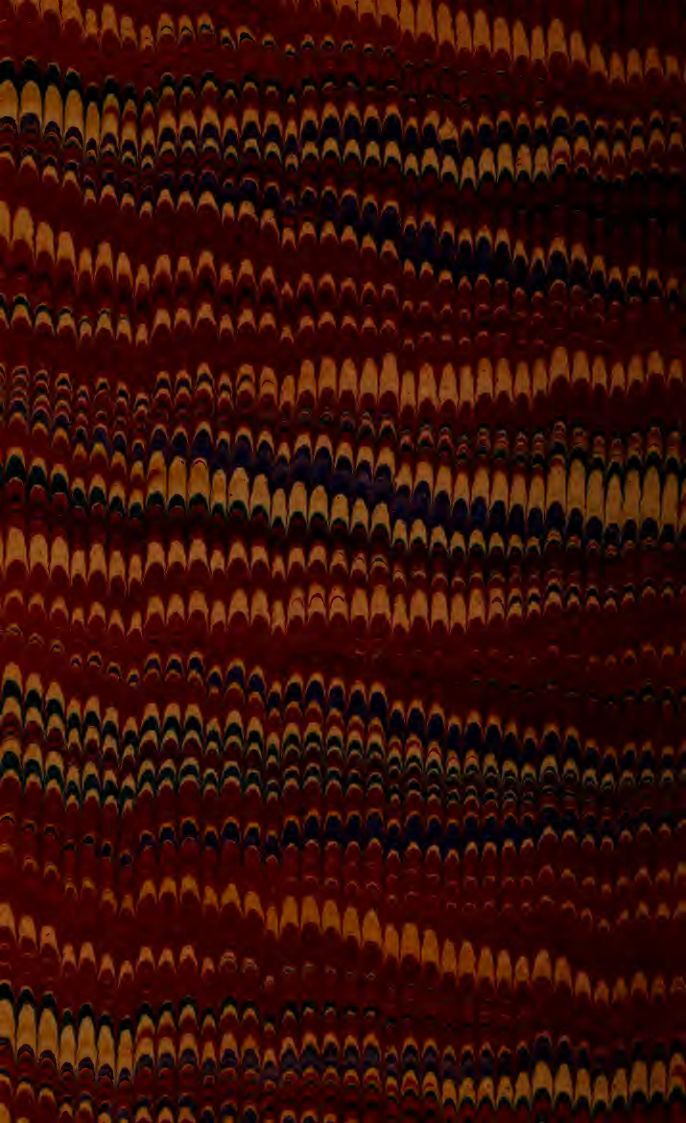
So it is when Jesus comes into the life and takes possession of it. He can take the broken fragments of a life, a life which the world has cast aside perhaps as worthless, and, breathing into it his Holy Spirit, enable it to utter heaven's own harmonies. Christian activity is that work in his name and under the inspiration of his Spirit which goes into the dark corners and dust-heaps of the world and brings forth instruments to praise him. What a glorious thing it is to think that after having done this work and gone to our reward there will perhaps break upon the ear music far sweeter than anything ever known before, and one will come whose face has something strangely famil-

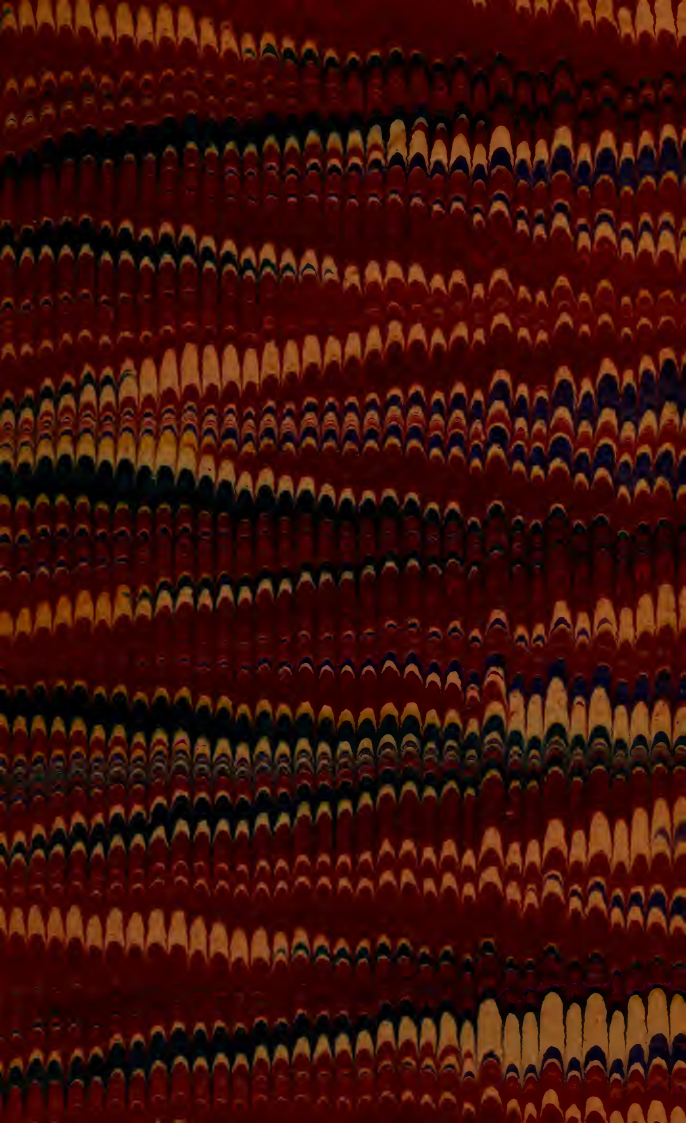
iar, and yet so bright that we do not realize that it has ever been seen before by us, and will say: "All this music is the result of your work. You were a Christian, you worked for the Master; I was an old violin you took out of the dust-heap in a dark alley on earth, and others hearing the music you taught me to sing carried on the strain until this multitude to-day sings the song of Moses and the Lamb."



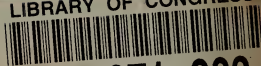


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